



Ohio's School Nurse TOOLKIT

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The logo features three stylized human figures in shades of blue and teal, arranged in a cluster with arms raised.

**Children's
Oral Health**
Action Team

July 2014



A GUIDE TO HELP MAKE GOOD DECISIONS FOR
YOUR SCHOOL'S ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

ABOUT COHAT:

This toolkit is brought to you by the Children's Oral Health Action Team (COHAT), created in 2009 by the Ohio Department of Health Director's Task Force on Oral Health and Access to Dental Care. We are a team of 30-plus member organizations who are well versed in children's oral health policy and/or have a key stake in improving children's oral health in Ohio. Members include providers (dentists, dental hygienists, pediatricians, school nurses, school-based health centers and children's hospitals), advocates, representatives from the early childhood and school-age community, the children's disability community, insurance providers and state officials.

What We Do

The Children's Oral Health Action Team was created to make sure Ohio Children have healthy teeth and gums. The best way to do this is to make good, comprehensive oral care available to all children in our state regardless of family income or location. COHAT works to educate the public and health care professionals about the need for preventive care. COHAT also advocates and educates by convening committed partners, identifying a shared agenda and mobilizing to achieve our goals:

- **GOAL 1:** Grow partnerships to advocate for children's oral health policy.
- **GOAL 2:** Advance oral health awareness, education and literacy for all Ohioans.
- **GOAL 3:** Change health care practices to improve children's oral health.

Contributors

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CONCERNS:

Tooth decay is the most common chronic illness among children in Ohio.

It is five times more prevalent than asthma.

51% of kids in Ohio have tooth decay by the time they reach 3rd grade.



NEARLY
340,000
OHIO KIDS
HAVE NEVER
SEEN A DENTIST.

Introduction

Good oral health is critical to our general health and well-being. It enables us to eat properly, work productively, go to school ready to focus on learning, feel good about our appearance, and enjoy life. The mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body, providing clues about an individual's overall health. Recent studies have shown a link between oral diseases and ear/sinus infections, weakened immune systems, diabetes, and heart and lung disease.

Although it's widely known that oral health is an important part of children's overall health and well-being, too many kids in Ohio don't have access to the preventive and primary oral health care they need. In fact, dental care is the largest unmet health care need for all Ohio children. Almost half a million (486,000, or one-in-four) children in Ohio are without dental insurance—more than four times the number of children without any health insurance. Unfortunately, this is because oral health care is often considered as unnecessary or extra. In many instances, oral health care coverage is offered as a supplemental policy only after more “essential” services are bought.

Access to quality and affordable dental care is not the same across racial geographic lines. Children living in Appalachian counties disproportionately suffer from untreated cavities, and have a greater need for early and urgent dental care than children living in other counties. Likewise, children from low-income families also have more cavities and toothaches, and are less likely to have dental insurance than children from middle- and/or upper-class families.

Poor dental health affects more than teeth and gums, it has a resounding impact on people and places. One national study found that children in California missed 847,000 school days—51 million hours—in 2007 because of toothaches and other dental problems. It also directly translates to reduced worker productivity for adults who miss work because of either untreated dental issues or having to take their kid(s) to the dentist.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

School-based programs are oftentimes viewed favorably because they eliminate barriers to care.

School nurses are health professionals and a logical choice when it comes to planning and implementing oral health programs in their schools and/or districts.

As school nurses using evidence-based approaches, you strive to keep students educated and healthy so that they can learn. The Children's Oral Health Action Team (COHAT) has assembled a toolkit to help school nurses plan and implement an oral health program at their school or in their district. Often, school nurses must describe their programs to administrators and the community, and explain how they affect learning.

Develop an oral health program for your community.

Children with healthy mouths:

- Show up to school ready to learn
- Have an easier time concentrating on school work, and aren't plagued by constant toothaches or other distracting pains
- Are less anxious
- Can eat a healthy diet, promoting better overall health
- Are physically healthier than those needing dental care
- Sleep better
- Have better attendance

As you consider what level of oral health to deliver as a part of your school's health program, our toolkit will help guide you in making good decisions for your school population.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

How to Start:

As a school nurse planning and developing an oral health program, a number of areas need to be assessed in order to determine how your administration can serve its students. After gathering data, evaluate what your school(s) can offer to enhance or complement community services.

What to consider:

1. School/community populations and their oral health needs
2. Resources available in your community and the surrounding area
3. Barriers in your community that make oral care more difficult to obtain
4. Attitudes among school staff and families toward making oral care available in schools
5. The physical layout of the school, both inside and out, space(s) available for an on-site oral health program, etc.
6. Available school staff and community personnel to help implement oral health initiatives
7. Places in the community where students can visit to learn about and observe oral care

Possible programs:

1. School-based sealant programs
2. Fluoridated water in your school/communities
3. Oral health and dental screening programs
4. Oral health education programs: classroom visits, short videos, daily announcements, school newsletter articles, teacher curriculum support, guest speakers, etc.
5. Oral health field trips
6. On-site oral care: routine and/or restorative care
7. Off-site partners for routine and/or restorative care
8. Transportation programs to off-site care



ORAL HEALTH CARE EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL NURSES

Assessing and providing oral health care in a school setting can be challenging for both the novice and experienced school nurse.

The following resources provide education for school nurses on how to familiarize themselves with general oral health, oral health concerns in childhood/adolescence, common dental injuries and dental problems, and how to develop comprehensive school models for the delivery of oral health services.

1. Oral Health Continuing Nursing & Health Professional Education Programs
www.oralhealthconnections.org/Learn
2. A Health Professional's Guide to Pediatric Oral Health Management
www.mchoralhealth.org/PediatricOH/index.htm
3. Ohio Department of Health – Oral Health Screening Pocket Guide for School Nurses
www.mchoralhealth.org/materials/multiples/schoolscreening/PocketGuide.pdf
4. American Academy of Pediatrics – Children's Oral Health
www2.aap.org/commpeps/ochs/oralhealth/index.html
5. National Maternal & Child Oral Health Resource Center – Bright Futures Toolkit
www.mchoralhealth.org/Toolbox/professionals.html



ORAL HEALTH CARE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

Nurses can collaborate with staff on available programs and training

School nurses provide education at several levels (individual, group, class, school, and district-wide). Based on an assessment of the school's or district's needs, a nurse can collaborate with staff on available programs, present information, model a program in a classroom, or provide a "train the trainer" program. Below are a handful of links to sites and programs available to school nurses.

1. National Association of School Nurses – Oral Health Connections

www.oralhealthconnections.org/Teach

Oral Health Connections provides a litany of useful information for school nurses, including oral health education targeted to children of different ages (preschool, K-8, high school). This website features links to resources that offer flexible lesson plans, support materials, hands-on classroom demonstrations, student activity sheets, etc. Specific resources include:

- American Dental Association – National Children's Dental Health Month
- Smile Smarts – Oral Health Curriculum
- Colgate Oral Health Curricula, Activities, and Resources for Teachers
- National Children's Oral Health Foundation
- American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- National Spit Tobacco Education Program

2. Ohio Department of Health – Educational Materials and Information for Teachers

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oraledumat/schlprogs.aspx

The Ohio Department of Health provides educational materials and information school nurses can share with teachers for a variety of lesson plans, content for curriculum, and teaching modules.

3. Colgate – Bright Smiles, Bright Future

www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/HomePage.cvsp

Colgate's "Bright Smiles, Bright Future" program provides free dental screenings and education to children in need. The program's multicultural education materials have reached more than half a billion children across 80 countries.

4. National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center – Bright Futures Toolbox

www.mchoralhealth.org/Toolbox/professionals.html#education

The NMCOHRC "Bright Futures" guide is designed to help health professionals implement specific oral health guidelines during pregnancy and the postpartum period, infancy, early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence.

5. Delta Dental Teaching Tools & Classroom Resources

www.deltadentaloh.com/Wellness/Download-Materials/Teaching-Tools.aspx

Delta Dental is proud to provide high-quality educational materials to help teachers and caregivers teach children about good oral health. Included in the link are lesson plans, activity pages, fun oral health facts, and more.

EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

*Healthy habits are taught
at school, but developed
at home.*

School nurses also provide education for students and families in their communities. Healthy habits are taught at school, but developed at home. Educational information for students and families is critical to maintaining good oral health. Below are a few links to resources available for educating children and their families.

1. Ohio Department of Health – Oral Health Program

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oraledumat/pteduc.aspx

The Ohio Department of Health's Oral Health Program has several fact sheets on important topics such as brushing a baby's teeth, fluoride varnish applications, early childhood caries, oral piercings, etc. Several of these are offered in both English and Spanish for multicultural audiences.


2. Ohio Department of Health – Resources for Head Start Programs

www.odh.ohio.gov/en/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oraledumat/hdstart.aspx

Head Start is a program designed to improve school readiness of children from low-income families. School readiness depends in part on a child's health, including his or her oral health. Head Start performance standards require that each child's oral health status be determined early in the school year and diagnostic and treatment services be provided while the child is enrolled.



PREVENTION



A tenet of good oral health care is to protect at-risk populations by preventing oral diseases before they occur.

In Ohio, the Ohio Department of Health has two such programs: a fluoride mouth rinse program in areas that do not have fluoridated water, and a school-based dental sealant program. These programs are administered at the school-level and offer opportunities to collaborate with community partners.

1. Ohio Department of Health – Fluoride Mouth Rinse Program

www.odh.ohio.gov/en/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oralprev/mouthingrinse.aspx

2. Ohio Department of Health – School-Based Dental Sealant Program

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/grantfunds/sbds.aspx

ODH also has a School-Based Oral Health Prevention Specialist who can help schools navigate these programs and determine if they are eligible.

**For more information, contact Shannon Cole:
614-466-3543**



SCREENING AND CARE FOR ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Screening for oral health can be done by a school nurse or community dental professional.

Nurse screenings can be done at the same time as state mandated vision and hearing screens, or as a separate program. These screenings help school nurses determine the level of need for oral health care services within a school or district.

1. Ohio Department of Health – Screening Guidelines and Pocket Guide

www.mchoralhealth.org/materials/multiples/schoolscreening/index.html

These training materials were developed to help school nurses learn how to conduct school-based oral health screenings. Resources include a two-part online video, screening guidelines, and a pocket guide that provides practical guidance on conducting screenings in a school-based setting in a way that's effective and efficient.

2. Ohio Department of Health – Dental First Aid

www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/ohs/oral%20health/DentalFirstAid%202012.ashx

ODH provides useful information for school nurses on what to do in case of a dental emergency (severe head/mouth injuries, broken jaws, teeth knocked out, etc.).

3. Ohio Department of Health – Emergency Guidelines for Schools

www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/chss/school%20nursing/emergencyguidelinesforschools2007.ashx

This care manual and accompanying flow chart describes what school personnel should do in case of medical emergencies when a school nurse is not present. Information specific to dental emergencies can be found on pages 104-105.



REFERRALS

Once an oral health screening has been performed, the next step is to work with students' parents and families to access the care they need.

An easy place to start for school nurses is to put together a list of dental providers in your area and include it with the referral. This can be personalized to individual needs and available resources in the community. School nurses should develop working relationships with dental providers in the area prior to making referrals. Oral health care can be community-based or school-based, depending on the kind of services available and the students' level of need.

Below are resources to refer in Ohio communities. By no means is this an exhaustive list; rather, it's a springboard to help you discover the different kinds of dental providers across the state. We encourage you to use these links to research what services are available in your communities, and tailor it to unique populations however you see fit.

I. Ohio Department of Health – Safety Net Dental Clinics

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oralhowdoi/clinics.aspx

Safety Net Dental Clinics are programs that provide dental care and are mostly operated by local health departments, health centers, hospitals and other organizations. The programs often serve patients covered by Medicaid and offer sliding-fees, reduced fees, or free care to patients who can't afford to pay a private dentist.

See the 2014 statewide listing of safety net dental programs:

www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/ohs/oral%20health/SN%20Brochure%201_14.aspx

2. Healthy Start/Healthy Families

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oralhowdoi/hlthstart.aspx

Children, families, and pregnant women can receive free and low-cost dental care through Healthy Start/Healthy Families, Ohio's Medicaid program.

3. Dental OPTIONS (Ohio Partnership To Improve Oral health through access to Needed Services)

www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/safetynet/options.aspx

Dental OPTIONS is a program offered by the Ohio Department of Health in partnership with the Ohio Dental Association. The mission of OPTIONS is to assist Ohioans with special health care needs and/or financial barriers to obtain dental care. OPTIONS patients are primarily adults; many are the "working poor," or the elderly living on a fixed income. Eligible patients are matched with volunteer OPTIONS dentists who have agreed to reduce fees for dental care.

4. Ohio Association of Community Health Centers

www.ohiochc.org

OACHC represents Ohio's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), supporting access to high-quality, affordable health care across the state. OACHC represents Ohio's 41 community health centers at over 200 locations, including 3 mobile units in 47 of Ohio's 88 counties.

5. Find a Dentist Near You

www.oralhealthconnections.org/LocateCare

The National Association of School Nurses "Oral Health Connections" provides links to tools that locate dental professionals based on proximity to a specific zip code. This resource can help you find dentists, pediatric dentists, and orthodontists in your community.

6. Ohio Dental Colleges and Universities:

Case Western Reserve University – School of Dental Medicine

<http://dental.case.edu>

The Ohio State University – College of Dentistry

<http://dent.osu.edu>

Dental schools will often host events throughout the year during which dental students provide routine oral health services for the community either free of charge or at a reduced rate.



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Visit:
www.RaiseYourVoiceForKids.org/COHAT